

Bell Race Star DLX Flex £649.99

'It's a real star!'



Tested by Emma Franklin for 10 months

The carbon-shelled Bell Race Star Flex has become a firm favourite, as it's right up there with the best when it comes to quality and innovative features. First and foremost is Bell's proprietary Flex lining, which is a three-layer EPS claimed to offer enhanced impact absorption at varied speeds, including protection from rotational forces. The outer-most petal-shaped layer adds a level of adaptive fit, meaning Flex-equipped lids stand a better chance of suiting more head shapes, so say Bell. I have to agree, with the Race Star Flex being forget-you're-wearing-it comfortable right from day one.

The next stand-out feature is the huge visor aperture. Bell call it 'Panovision', and it certainly lives up to the name because peripheral vision is nothing short of panoramic. The lid comes with a Transitions self-tinting visor thrown in, which is worth £140, as well as a Pinlock (for the clear visor) and a proper helmet bag, too. Other cool features include the use of magnets to hold in the cheek pads and also retain the flappy end of the chin strap back on the double-D ring



No need for a dark visor...

5000 miles ON TEST

fastener. After almost a year of use, including its fair share of salty winter rides, the Star still shines as bright as it did the first day I wore it. The matt finish cleans up really well, meanwhile the high quality of the interior means it's shrugging off any signs of wear. And, although this is a lid designed primarily for sports use, it's exceptional as a road helmet, being both quiet

and draught-free, thanks to the fabric pelmet running around the back and sides and the removable chin curtain. It's an excellent lid – even at its full price of £649.99 – but even more so if you bag one at one of the retailers who are discounting certain colours to £369.99.

Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★
www.bellhelmets.co.uk



It's not great for trackday use

AGV K3 SV-S £219.99

'Great value'



Tested by Ben Clarke for nine months

AGV seem to have spent the money where it matters – so everything that moves or touches your skin feels solid and well-made. You get a clear Pinlock-ready visor and the Pinlock itself is included. It's got AGV's anti-scratch finish and after 1500 miles there's not an imperfection to be found.

The field of vision is fine from side-to-side (190-degrees claimed) but there's very little leeway upwards for a sporty helmet. I wore it to ride a GSX-R1000R on test for a day and in a racing tuck you struggle to see, which is sub-optimal.

Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★
www.agv.co.uk

1500 miles ON TEST



Great vents and field of vision

1500 miles ON TEST

Shoei NXR2 from £429.99

'One of the best I've ever used'



Tested by Simon Brown for one year

Quite simply one of the best helmets I have worn. The NXR2 meets the stringent ECE 22.06 standard, so you can be confident it will do a grand job – while it's also comfortable and quiet. A wide aperture provides a panoramic field of vision and there is very little in the way of wind noise. Shoei say they have improved the cheek and ear padding and revised the seal around the visor over the NXR, and it's paid off. Stability at motorway speeds is spot on (I have

been wearing the helmet on my naked Ducati for motorway trips from the Midlands to Kent) and it is light at 1450g. Swapping the visor is stress free, as is removing the lining for cleaning. In an emergency there are tabs medics can use to release the cheek pads. In terms of ventilation, there are intakes on the chin, forehead and either side of the head. If you don't fancy white there are colours and a range of graphics, although you'll need to be prepared to pay that bit more.

Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★
www.shoeiassured.co.uk



LS2 Challenger CGT £299

'Full carbon spec'



Tested by Michael Guy for two and a half years

This is the first carbon helmet I've used and by far the lightest lid I have worn. In fact, it's so light (1280 grams) it takes me by surprise whenever I pick it up to put it on. Yet in terms of specification, the LS2 is fully loaded with a three-layer construction shell, scratch-proof pinlock-ready visor, integrated dark visor and ventilation. So far my only gripes with the helmet are that the integrated dark visor is slightly cloudy, which means it lacks some clarity in bright conditions and the trim around the base of the helmet keeps working its way out of the shell, which is annoying.

Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★
www.ls2helmets.com

2400 miles ON TEST



HJC RPHA 70 £349.99

'Not spec-tacular'



Tested by Justin Hayzelden for three years

It's light and comfortable, with good aerodynamics, and I've spent long days in the saddle barely aware it's on my head. The interior is plush and the dropdown sun shade is welcome. It's not without niggles though. I ride in spectacles and like to be able to open the visor just a crack to stop them fogging up, however at the first notch it's too wide and lets in rain. It also rattles in turbulent air and has a tendency to suddenly snap shut, which can be annoying, especially when filtering in traffic with both hands busy on the bars.

Quality ★★★★★ Value ★★★★★
www.hjchelmets.eu

5700 miles ON TEST